

The Current Situation, Problems and Countermeasures of History Curriculum Settings in the Major of Ideological and Political Education

Ma Wenrui

College of Marxism, Foshan University (FOSU)

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Abstract

The major of Ideological and Political Education aims to cultivate versatile talents with good political theoretical literacy, ideological and moral qualities, and scientific and cultural qualities, shouldering the important mission of promoting the dissemination and practice of socialist core values. History courses play a foundational, supportive, and value-guiding role in this major. However, there are currently three major problems: the structural disconnection between history courses and ideological and political education, the hierarchical disconnection between general history teaching and thematic research, and the functional disconnection between the transmission of historical knowledge and the internalization of values. In response, this study, through historical literature review and logical argumentation, proposes that collaborative efforts in curriculum system restructuring, teaching method innovation, and value goal integration are needed. This will enhance students' in-depth historical understanding of Marxist theory and its achievements in the Chinese context, strengthen their ability to analyze real-world issues using the materialist conception of history, cultivate their "sense of history," solidify their political orientation, reinforce the "Four Confidences," and nurture ideological and political education talents for the new era.

Keywords— *Ideological and Political Education Major; History Courses; Curriculum Reform; Socialist Core Values*

I. INTRODUCTION

The ideological and political education major (undergraduate) in Chinese universities has been established for 40 years. Its purpose is to cultivate versatile talents with solid political theoretical literacy, sound ideological and moral qualities, and scientific and cultural qualities, who are engaged in publicity, organization, management, and ideological and political work based on this major. At the undergraduate level,

the focus is particularly on training teachers for the "Morality and Rule of Law" course in primary and secondary schools. Therefore, the ideological and political education major in universities is not only about producing qualified graduates but also bears the significant responsibility of promoting the dissemination and practice of socialist core values in the new era, as well as enhancing the moral standards and awareness of the rule of law among citizens. Xi Jinping

pointed out: "We must strengthen the study of history, deeply grasp historical laws, recognize historical trends, summarize historical experiences, and remember historical lessons. Through profound reflection on history, we can better carry out our current work and move toward the future." [1] As an important front for talent cultivation in the ideological field, the ideological and political education major should place great emphasis on fostering students' historical thinking, and offering corresponding history-related courses is a natural and essential part of this process.

II. THE INTRINSIC CONNECTION BETWEEN HISTORY AND IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

Marx pointed out in *The German Ideology*, "We know only a single science, the science of history." [2] Although this passage was crossed out by the author in the manuscript, it still reflects Marx's understanding and emphasis on the science of history. In fact, many theories and concepts in ideological and political education have deep historical roots. For example, the birth of the Marxist theoretical system emerged gradually during a specific historical period, alongside the economic development of capitalist society, the intensification of class contradictions, and the rise of the workers' movement. From the initial ideas of utopian socialism to Marx and Engels critically inheriting the theoretical achievements of German classical philosophy, British classical political economy, and French and British utopian socialism, and then establishing scientific socialism—this entire evolution was nurtured within the long river of history. Another example is the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which was gradually constructed through the historical practices of revolution, construction, and reform in modern and contemporary China by continuously summarizing experiences, learning lessons, and exploring innovations. As Engels said, "The theoretical thinking of every era, including that of our own, is a historical product." [3]

During his inspection of the former site of the

Southwest Associated University in Yunnan, Xi Jinping proposed the concept of "cultivating a new generation with a sense of history," and the cultivation of this "sense of history" should first be reflected in the training of ideological and political education professionals. Generally speaking, the narratives of ideological and political education (including curriculum-based ideological and political education) mainly consist of two types: mechanism narratives centered on structure and temporal narratives based on events [4]. Therefore, adhering to the materialist conception of history and conducting education from a historical perspective and mindset, enabling students to utilize disciplinary historical resources to counteract historical nihilism [5], is a key focus in the training of ideological and political education professionals.

Returning to the professional development of ideological and political education, cultivating new talents with a "sense of history" and resisting historical nihilism primarily require students to master fundamental historical facts. On this foundation, by employing the analytical tools of historical materialism, students can clearly understand the background, developmental trajectory, and historical challenges faced by Marxism and the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Only then can students grasp the essence and connotation of ideological and political education more profoundly and accurately, comprehending the roots of its scientific and revolutionary nature. Therefore, incorporating relevant historical courses is not only necessary but also highly meaningful. Such curriculum design helps students deepen their understanding of the historical development process, enhances their ability to analyze contemporary social phenomena and issues with greater depth and breadth, thereby laying a solid foundation for cultivating high-quality talents capable of accurately grasping the pulse of the times and guiding social trends.

III. CURRENT SITUATION AND ISSUES IN THE CURRICULUM DESIGN OF HISTORY COURSES FOR IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION MAJORS

According to the "National Standards for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Programs in Regular Higher Education Institutions," the ideological and political education major currently does not require courses on general history (both Chinese and foreign) to be listed as elective courses [6]. As a result, only a very small number of higher education institutions, based on their own academic traditions, offer related general history courses (such as "Ancient Chinese History" and "Ancient World History"), like Foshan University. Most institutions, in accordance with the "National Standards for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Programs in Regular Higher Education Institutions," offer thematic history courses. History courses are commonly offered in ideological and political education majors. However, from the three dimensions of history course design, history teaching methods, and the cultivation of historical awareness, there currently exist three disconnections in the teaching of history courses within the training of ideological and political education professionals: (a) The structural disconnection between history courses and ideological and political education; (b) The hierarchical disconnection between general history teaching and thematic research; (c) The functional disconnection between the transmission of historical knowledge and the internalization of values.

(1) The Structural Disconnection Between History Courses and Ideological and Political Education

The essence of structural disconnection lies in the fracture between knowledge supply and value objectives. In the history courses offered within the ideological and political education major, there often persists a history-centered teaching philosophy that emphasizes "empirical research" in instruction while lacking the "value guidance" stressed in ideological and political education. In other words, there is no effective integration of the methodologies of these two disciplines. Consequently, history courses exhibit superficiality in value guidance, failing to effectively

utilize historical teaching to help students understand the intrinsic logical transformation from historical laws to political theories.

(2) The hierarchical disconnection between general history teaching and thematic research.

The hierarchical disconnect essentially reflects an imbalance between broad coverage and in-depth exploration. General history teaching often follows a timeline-based narrative, while thematic courses tend to fall into the trap of "fragmented textual research." Meanwhile, assessments in general history courses often emphasize memorization, whereas thematic courses lack training in critical analysis of historical sources. Together, these factors lead to a disconnect in students' skill development and a flattening of knowledge acquisition. For example, even among students who have systematically completed relevant course training, it is still common to equate "people-oriented thought" directly with "people-centeredness," while overlooking the fundamental differences between "feudal hierarchy" and "socialist democracy." This reveals that the current combination of general history and thematic courses in ideological and political education has failed to lay the foundation for critical thinking. Besides flaws in curriculum design, the lack of an interdisciplinary teacher collaborative lesson-planning mechanism also contributes to this phenomenon.

(3) The functional disconnection between the transmission of historical knowledge and the internalization of values.

Functional disconnection essentially refers to the alienation between cognitive input and emotional identification. Currently, the teaching practice of history courses in ideological and political education still predominantly follows the "lecture-memorization" model, with insufficient application of experiential teaching methods such as scenario simulations and oral history interviews. Moreover, in course assessments, the dimension of value internalization carries relatively low weight. These factors result in inefficient internalization of the value of historical knowledge among students,

and over-reliance on textbook language fails to effectively activate students' "sense of historical presence," leading to a lack of emotional resonance that historical knowledge should inherently evoke.

In summary, to change the current situation of "triple disconnection," it is necessary to make coordinated efforts in three aspects: restructuring the curriculum system (structural), innovating teaching methods (hierarchical), and integrating value objectives (functional).

IV. OPTIMIZATION PATHS FOR THE CURRICULUM DESIGN OF HISTORY COURSES IN IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION MAJORS

The issue of the "three disconnects" in the teaching of history courses for ideological and political education majors is essentially a fracture in the systematic coordination among curriculum design, teaching implementation methods, and evaluation feedback mechanisms. To achieve synergistic efforts among these three aspects, it is necessary to break disciplinary barriers through structural integration, bridge the depth of knowledge through hierarchical progression, and connect value recognition through functional transformation.

(1) Construction of Interdisciplinary Course Clusters

Due to their different disciplinary affiliations, history and ideological and political education courses inevitably exhibit distinct training orientations in curriculum design, which is the direct cause of structural

disconnection. The mechanical juxtaposition of different disciplinary systems inevitably leads to modular fragmentation. Currently, undergraduate history education places more emphasis on historical fact verification, while the training of ideological and political professionals requires a greater focus on value guidance. This results in long-term parallel states between different disciplines within the same professional training in terms of teaching objectives, knowledge frameworks, and teaching resources. Therefore, it is necessary to construct an interdisciplinary "history-politics" course cluster to improve teaching methods and address the issue of structural disconnection. The development of this course cluster should follow the path of "laying a foundation through general history—deepening through specialized topics."

Drawing on insights from relevant literature, this study proposes that history and ideological-political courses can be modularly integrated into two major course clusters: foundational general history and thematic deepening. Taking the curriculum design of the ideological-political education major at Foshan University as an example, the foundational general history module integrates historical spatiotemporal frameworks with the origins of ideological-political theories, while the thematic deepening module combines historical-political interdisciplinary topics with the cultivation of critical thinking (Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1 Foundational Course Cluster for the History of Ideological and Political Education

Course Group	General History of China and the World	General Theory	Integrated Logic
Foundation of General History	Ancient Chinese History, Topics in World Ancient History, Modern Chinese History, Topics in World Modern History	Marxist philosophy, Marxist political economy, and the theory and practice of scientific socialism	Historical Spatiotemporal Framework and the Origins of Ideological and Political Theory

Table 2 Specialized Deepening Course Cluster for Ideological and Political Education Major

Course Group	General History of China and the World	General Theory	Integrated Logic
Topic Deepening	History of Modern Chinese Political Thought, History of the Chinese Communist Party, Contemporary Chinese Government and Politics, Modern Western Political Theory	Introduction to Chinese Philosophy, Topics in the History of Western Philosophy, Introduction to Historiography, Selected Readings from Marxist-Leninist Classics	The Deep Connection Between Historical Events and Political Theories

The general history module establishes a historical temporal-spatial framework through comprehensive history courses, revealing the laws of historical development from a materialist perspective via theoretical general education courses. Furthermore, it can merge "Ancient Chinese History" and "Topics in Ancient World History" into "An Outline of Chinese and Foreign Civilizations," reducing redundant content and emphasizing comparative studies of Chinese and Western cultures. The thematic deepening module places greater emphasis on the profound connection between historical facts and theories. For example, linking "The History of the Chinese Communist Party" with "The Theory of Marxism with Chinese Characteristics" to analyze how the "Agrarian Revolution" evolved from historical practice into the theory of "Armed Independent Regimes of Workers and Peasants." Another example is combining "Modern Western Political Theory" with "Topics in World Modern History" to critically compare "the global expansion history of liberal thought with the practical responses of the socialist movement."

The construction of course groups focuses on collaboration among teachers from different disciplines, requiring the establishment of a comprehensive collective lesson preparation system. This enables teachers from various subjects to effectively deconstruct and reorganize teaching content, achieving interdisciplinary synergy. Additionally, in the talent development plan, closely related courses should be

scheduled in the same semester or consecutive semesters whenever possible.

(2) Innovation in Teaching Methods: Interdisciplinary Collaboration

In line with the new curriculum module design, teaching methods also need targeted innovation, establishing a new interdisciplinary teaching methodology system.

A. Historical Context Reality Comparison Method

The ultimate concern of history should be the actual social conditions of the present. Using historical events as a mirror, the goal is to restore context and create contemporary parallels, thereby activating students' "sense of historical presence" and transforming their understanding of historical patterns into the analysis of real-world issues. This should be one of the keys focuses on the training of students majoring in ideological and political education.

Scenario simulation and role-playing are the preferred methods for this teaching approach. Taking the course "History of the Chinese Communist Party" as an example, a simulated meeting on "Drafting the 1931 Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic" can be designed. Students can be required to explore the topic from historical, political, and value-based perspectives. From the **historical perspective**, students should reconstruct the historical context based on economic data from the agrarian revolution period (such as land distribution in rural southern Jiangxi), class conflicts (the opposition between peasants and landlords), and

the international environment (directives from the Comintern). From the **political perspective**, students can be divided into groups to role-play as "worker-peasant representatives," "intellectuals," and "military cadres," debating issues such as "whether to retain bourgeois voting rights in the constitution" to experience the logic behind the formation of the "democratic centralism" principle. From the **value perspective**, students can compare clauses on "people's democratic dictatorship" in the "Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic" with those in the contemporary constitution to understand the historical continuity of the Chinese Communist Party's political legitimacy.

This approach allows for the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge from courses like "Political Economy" and "Constitutional Law" in specialized deepening modules. Additionally, cross-temporal dialogues can be employed to connect general history content with thematic modules. For example, in the course "Contemporary Chinese Government and Politics," topics from "Modern and Contemporary World History" can be introduced, simulating a cross-temporal dialogue between "the governance structure of the Paris Commune" and "China's grassroots mass self-governance system" to analyze the historical evolution of proletarian political organization forms.

Tracing the roots of contemporary issues is also a crucial approach in teaching through historical context and present-day comparison. For example, in the course "Contemporary Social Issues in China," taking the "urban-rural dual structure" as a topic, one can integrate content from "Ancient Chinese History" and "Modern Chinese History" to trace back to historical milestones such as the "Single Whip Reform" tax policy of the Ming and Qing dynasties, the "Rural Reconstruction Movement" during the Republic of China era, and the "household registration system" in the early years of the People's Republic of China. Through long-term analysis, this method reveals the deep-seated historical logic behind structural contradictions, guiding students to propose governance solutions based on historical

experiences (such as drawing wisdom from the ancient "Equal Field System" to optimize land transfer policies).

B. Interdisciplinary project-based learning

Interdisciplinary project-based teaching is centered around problem-driven pedagogy, using questions as the guiding force to integrate resources from disciplines such as history, politics, and philosophy. Through teamwork, it accomplishes research involving historical deconstruction, theoretical analysis, and value reconstruction, thereby achieving the goal of breaking down disciplinary barriers.

Project-based learning requires the coordination of different courses, with the same project theme being approached from different angles in various courses. For example, a project theme could be "The Historical Construction of the 'Grand Unification' Narrative and Contemporary State Governance—From the Qin Dynasty's Commandery-County System to 'One Country, Two Systems.'"

In terms of interdisciplinary collaboration, courses such as Ancient Chinese History, Contemporary Chinese Government and Politics, and Sinicized Marxist Theory can be integrated. The history course could focus on tracing the evolution of the centralized system from the Qin and Han dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties. The political science course might require an analysis of the legal foundations of the "unitary system" as a state structure. The Marxist theory course could ask students to explain how "One Country, Two Systems" represents an innovative development of Marxist state theory.

For implementation, students can be divided into different groups, such as a historical research group, a theoretical analysis group, and a value interpretation group. The historical research group could use texts like Records of the Grand Historian and Book of Han to reconstruct the challenges (e.g., resistance from the nobility of the six former states) and strategies in implementing the commandery-county system. The theoretical analysis group might compare the logic of federalism in The Federalist Papers with the discourse on central-local relations in On the Ten Major Relationships. The value interpretation group could

analyze cases like the return of Hong Kong and Macau to demonstrate how "One Country, Two Systems" embodies "the unity of principled firmness and strategic flexibility."

The final output could take the form of a jointly written research report, such as from 'Standardizing the Axle Width' to 'System Integration': A Study on the Historical Continuity of China's State Governance.

C. Deconstruction and Reconstruction – Critical Thinking Training

Through a three-stage training process involving historical evidence verification, ideological deconstruction, and value stance defense, students are equipped with the discursive ability to resist historical nihilism, fostering a cognitive logic of "facts - theory - values."

The first stage focuses on cultivating students' ability to critically analyze historical sources and discern multiple narratives. Taking the "Opium War" section from Modern Chinese History as an example, students compare the moral narrative of "barbarians violating authority" emphasized in Qing court memorials, the "clash of civilizations" discourse centered on "free trade obstruction" portrayed in British parliamentary archives, and analytical narratives examining the war's essence from a semi-colonial perspective. Students are required to closely read the texts and identify the underlying interests and ideological assumptions behind each narrative.

The second phase focuses on cultivating students' ability to analyze political discourse structures and engage in logical falsification. Taking the "Golden Decade of the Republic of China" section from Modern Chinese History as an example, students can be guided to conduct three levels of critique: empirical, theoretical, and value-based. For empirical critique, students can be tasked with examining historical data such as the income statistics of workers and peasants from 1927 to 1937 and maps showing the expansion of foreign concessions, exposing the class disparities beneath the "golden" facade. For theoretical critique, students can apply the analytical framework from Analysis of the

Classes in Chinese Society to deconstruct the bourgeois standpoint embedded in the "Golden Decade" narrative. For value critique, students can compare the Communist Party of China's land revolution practice of "land to the tiller" during the same period, demonstrating the fundamental differences between the two paths.

The third stage cultivates students' ability to construct discourse from the value standpoint of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Taking the course "Introduction to Historical Classics" as an example, a comparative analysis can be made between "A Short Course on the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)" and "A Brief History of the Communist Party of China," examining how the former deifies the authority of leaders through "historical determinism" and explaining how the latter narrates Party history with "people as the subject." Finally, students are required to write corresponding analytical reports, proposing discursive strategies to "resist historical nihilism."

In summary, the innovation in teaching models activates historical perception through contextual immersion, integrates knowledge systems via interdisciplinary practice, and solidifies value stances with critical study, transforming history courses into genuine "thought laboratories" for ideological education. This approach not only resolves the disconnection between history teaching and ideological education but also instills in the younger generation the profound spiritual drive to "draw lessons from history and create the future" through the cyclical process of deconstruction, reconstruction, and creation.

(3) Integration of Value Objectives

The integration of value objectives requires breaking through the current binary opposition in teaching between the "value neutrality" of historical studies and the "value precedence" of political science, in order to achieve a dialectical unity between historical laws and political values. By anchoring the value stance of historical materialism and guiding it with the core socialist values of Chinese characteristics, a progressive logic of "interpretation of historical laws—construction

of political legitimacy—generation of value identification" can be established, achieving a deep integration of historical cognition and political belief.

First, there is the valorization interpretation of historical laws, which requires efforts from two aspects. On one hand, it is necessary to transform causal necessity into value necessity, that is, to convert the objective laws of historical materialism into the value basis of political legitimacy. For example, when analyzing the failures of various classes in the historical process of "saving the nation from subjugation and ensuring its survival" in modern China, one can reveal the dual necessity of the proposition that "the leadership of the Communist Party of China is the choice of history and the people"—it is both the objective result of historical laws and the value expression of the people's subjectivity. Another example is when teaching the historical trend of the formation of the centralized system in the Qin and Han dynasties: while clarifying the causal necessity that the centralized system met the needs of the dispersed nature of small-scale peasant economy, one can further distill the Qin and Han concept of "great unity" into a geographical-cultural-political composite law for the survival of Chinese civilization and transform it into the contemporary value proposition that "national unity is the supreme interest of the nation." On the other hand, it is essential to dialectically combine historical critique with value defense. While deconstructing the historical phenomena of autocracy and exploitation in class societies, one should simultaneously construct the value coordinates of socialist fairness and justice. For instance, in analyzing the process of the agrarian revolution abolishing the feudal land ownership system, one should both expose the exploitative nature of landlord land ownership (historical critique) and highlight the political affirmation of labor value in "land to the tiller" (value defense).

The second aspect is the diachronic construction of political values. It is necessary to modernize and contemporarily reconstruct traditional values and revolutionary values (political legitimacy). When

teaching traditional values, such as the people-oriented thought and the ideal of a harmonious world in ancient Chinese intellectual history, while tracing their historical evolution, one can further reveal their "elective affinity" with socialist core values and place them within the Marxist theoretical framework of "human emancipation," ultimately interpreting the civilizational continuity and contemporary innovation of the concept of "common prosperity." In teaching revolutionary values, a diachronic narrative can be employed to connect revolutionary values from different periods, such as linking the "anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism" of the New Democratic Revolution period, the "Four Modernizations" of the socialist construction period, and the "national rejuvenation" of the new era into a chain of value progression, demonstrating the self-improvement logic of the socialist value system with Chinese characteristics in historical practice. For example, when teaching the Yuan Dynasty's "provincial system" and the Qing Dynasty's "bureaucratization of native officers" policy, emphasis can be placed on explaining the gradual optimization logic of China's institutions in maintaining the unity of a multi-ethnic nation, providing historical legitimacy for the "one country, two systems" policy.

Finally, there is the generation of value consensus. This can be approached through historical sentiment and value critique. For instance, when teaching Ancient Chinese History, one can use material heritage such as the Great Wall and the Grand Canal as carriers to weave a narrative of engineering history—"the Qin built the Great Wall, the Sui dug the Grand Canal, and the Ming constructed the Forbidden City"—thereby reinforcing institutional consensus on "pooling resources to accomplish major undertakings." Similarly, when covering modern world history, contrasting The Communist Manifesto's critique of capitalist exploitation (e.g., "workers have no country") with Marx's praise for the "people's sovereignty" of the Paris Commune can construct an emotional chain of identification with proletarian liberation.

On the dimension of value critique, a three-tier

defense mechanism—"empirical verification, logical falsification, value critique"—can be established to guard against the erosion of erroneous value consensus (e.g., historical nihilism). For example, in discussing the "end of history" thesis in Contemporary World Economy and Politics, one can expose its logical flaws through empirical analysis of the Soviet Union's collapse while reaffirming the value of "socialist superiority" through the practical achievements of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Alternatively, when analyzing the historical cycle of "long division must unite," comparing the prosperity of the Wen-Jing era with the decline of the late Qing Dynasty highlights the governance innovation value of the Chinese Communist Party in breaking free from historical cyclicity.

The essence of value-goal integration lies in bridging the value pathway between "historical truth" and "political virtue," ensuring that history courses not only teach "what happened in the past" but also reveal "why such choices should be made." By interpreting historical laws as the foundation of political values and anchoring political values as the guiding principle of historical cognition, it ultimately constructs a multidimensional value identification system for socialism with Chinese characteristics across the temporal dimension of "history-reality-future" and the spatial dimension of "individual-nation-civilization." This integration avoids the value nihilism of historical relativism while transcending the value dogmatism of political doctrine. It not only resolves the functional disconnection between imparting historical knowledge and internalizing values but also lays a philosophical foundation for cultivating ideological and political talents with historical depth and political direction in the new era.

V. CONCLUSION

History courses play an irreplaceable foundational, supportive, and value-guiding role in the cultivation of ideological and political education professionals. Through an analysis of the current status of history course offerings in ideological and political education

programs, this paper reveals three major disconnections. These disconnections hinder the full effectiveness of history courses in cultivating students' historical thinking, deepening theoretical understanding, solidifying value stances, and resisting historical nihilism.

This paper proposes a synergistic approach involving the restructuring of the curriculum system, the innovation of teaching methods, and the integration of value objectives to transform history courses into genuine "thought laboratories" for cultivating ideological and political education professionals. This approach not only enhances students' in-depth historical understanding of Marxist theory and its Sinicized and contemporary achievements but also strengthens their ability to analyze real-world issues using historical materialism. More importantly, it fosters a profound sense of "historical awareness," enabling students to solidify their political orientation through historical reflection and reinforcing their confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Ultimately, this cultivates a new generation of ideological and political education professionals who are capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation, possess deep historical insight, and demonstrate a strong sense of contemporary responsibility. Moving forward, it is essential to further test and refine these optimization strategies in practice, driving the reform of history courses in ideological and political education to deeper levels and better serving the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.

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